Questions to Ask When Creating Your First Ecommerce Store

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Undeniably ecommerce is just getting hotter from year to year. By 2020 the overall user penetration is expected to hit 70.18 percent. It's not yet late to hop on the bandwagon. In fact, right now is the best time to start your ecommerce store as the industry has grown mature, the user interest keeps growing, while new great ecommerce tools and technologies pop up each other day.

If you are a small brick-and-mortar store or just a budding entrepreneur with a bold new physical product idea, begin your journey to the world of ecommerce by asking yourself the next essential questions.

How Do I Create My New Store?

The good news is – you may not need to hire a developer to do the job for you. Shopify, Woocommerce for WordPress, Goodsie and Jumpseller among others, allow you to design attractive ecommerce websites with hardly any coding required. Some basic HTML and CSS design skills would definitely come as a great bonus, yet are not mandatory. These platforms allow you to style the overall look of your shop, create and upload your product catalog, set up shopping carts, securely process payments and even offer shipping integrations. You don't need to worry about hosting, connecting payment forms or anything alike.

However, such solutions are generally acceptable for small ecommerce companies. As your business grows you'll likely have to invest into an independently hosted website with more powerful functionality, including robust ecommerce CRM software, secure payment gateway and integration, plus – a higher converting website design.

What Type of Payment Processing System Should I Use?

The modern customer is particularly privy to limited payment options these days. In fact, most millennials feel reluctant about inputting their credit card data and opt to use PayPal or gift certificates whenever it's possible.

Your best bet is to offer multiple payment options. Stripe, 2CheckOut, Authorize.net and PayPal are typically among the most popular options. Yet, mind of the processing and installment fees involved as those may add-up quickly.

How Will I Handle Customer Support?

Efficient customer service is essential to keep your business afloat and prospering, especially with all the comparison-shopping out there and the easiness to bounce-off for a customer to another e-tailer. Obviously when you are just starting out, things may get a bit messy. Here are the essential tips you should stick to at the beginning:

- **Clearly outline your support hours and approximate time of response. There's nothing more frustrating for a customer than sending their query into a silent void.**

- **Grab a toll-free telephone number**, specifically for customer service purposes to avoid your normal phone buzzing all day.

- **Offer multiple support channels, yet stay wise with selection.** Sure, most consumers expect 24/7 on-site live chat support, but if that's something you cannot commit to right now, don't try to stick to it. Instead, offer phone/email support or (depending on who your audience is) choose a more creative channel e.g. Snapchat.

How Do I Create Great Product Images and Descriptions?

Crisp, bright and attractive product images are a must of any ecommerce store. As your users can't actually touch your product, they should be able to feel it through the visuals. You have two options here: the DIY method, which assumes you have some skills with handling a DSLR camera and good lightening. Or hire a professional photographer to get things done for you.

Bonus tip: if you hire a professional, ask them to shoot some additional pics for your social media (less formal) or give you all the raw photo files, so you could toy around with them yourself.

Creating juicy product descriptions is another important tick on your agenda. Keep them short, yet rich enough with curious details to spark customer interest. Additionally, don't forget to list all the important product characteristics e.g. materials, size, dimensions etc.

How Will I Attract Customers?

Your site is ready for the launch, now the question is – how will customers actually discover your store? Ecommerce is quite a crowded niche, so you need to consider your online marketing strategy before you set your website live. Here are the essential tips:

Make sure your website is responsive and SEO-optimized. That includes optimizing images, product pages and overall website structure.

Invest into paid social media advertising. Pinterest in the platform to be in that case as most users head there in a "buying state of mind". Facebook and Instagram can be worth pursuing as well, as long as you can set up your campaign right.

Influencer marketing is another hot trend. Create a list of online publishers relevant to your niche, who may be interested in reviewing your product on their blog and social media for a fee.